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INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE

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RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC

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SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CR

STATE PASS USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG

NSC FOR HARRIMAN

OSD FOR BREZINSKI

REL NATO/AUST/NZ/ISAF

CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: PRT QAL-E-NAW: WHY THERE IS NO DIAG IN
BADGHIS

KABUL 00003629 001.4 OF 002

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The DIAG process in Badghis is broken. Some of the reasons why are the same as elsewhere in Afghanistan: weak local authorities, powerful former commanders and limited reach of government authority. However, while in southern provinces the program struggles in the face of security threats that represent a real disincentive to disarm, Badghis is one of the quietest, most secure provinces in the country. Under these conditions, the failure of the DIAG process can be strongly attributed to a lack of local political will and the limited power of the central government to set a provincial agenda. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Badghis province is one of the quietest, safest provinces in Afghanistan. With the exception of three high profile killings of medical personnel in the last two years and the occasional tribal skirmish (reftel) there are few security problems. In comparison with other provinces, Badghis also has very few illegally armed groups, and local commanders, while they do exist, maintain a relatively low profile.

¶3. (SBU) The provinces DIAG committee meets weekly under the leadership of the Governor and includes the participation of the PRT. Though members of the committee profess commitment to the program, these meetings can only be described as a farce. Participants often call in suspects, generally very old men, or poor, illiterate villagers, to accuse them of possessing illegal arms. Invariably, the subjects insist that they have no arms and are let go after a

few minutes of harassment.

¶4. (SBU) According to official records, during the last year (June 2005 to June 2006) 2,156 arms and 83 tons of ammunition were collected through the program in Badghis. However, as elsewhere, most of these weapons are antiques or nonfunctioning. Officials report that there are more than 10,000 illegal arms (undoubtedly an underestimate) yet to be relinquished present in the province. Not one significant commander has been disarmed.

¶5. (SBU) Provincial authorities are not oblivious to the unsuccessful nature of the program, and frequently DIAG committee meetings turn to the question of whose fault it is. The provincial National Directorate of Security (NDS) chief typically complains that he has no influence over the districts, whose district administrators are in some cases commanders themselves. Officials from the Governors office report that district officials do not answer correspondence requesting reports on DIAG progress in their districts, and many of them, such as the prosecutors never even show up to work, let alone promote DIAG.

¶6. (SBU) The head of the Information and Culture Department criticizes the police and the NSD for their unwillingness to approach commanders, preferring instead to hassle ordinary citizens. He also blames the mullahs for not promoting DIAG as a religious duty and usually finishes his rant with a call to disband the weekly DIAG meeting altogether as a waste of time. The chief of the DIAG committee usually attributes the

KABUL 00003629 002.4 OF 002

lack of progress to a lack of resources, and specifically, the need for metal detectors and a car.

He also frequently reminds the committee that provincial DIAG is still in Stage Two negotiated, rather than obligatory relinquishment - which according to him means all local authorities can do is, ask nicely.

¶7. (SBU) After one particularly fruitless meeting, PRTOff reminded Acting Governor Azizullah that GOA President Karzai had just returned from a trip to Japan where he reaffirmed the central governments commitment to the DIAG program and raised millions in new funds to support it. Azizullah shrugged his shoulders and professed himself powerless to push harder for progress absent, stronger support from the central government. When asked what additional support he is looking for, Azizullah stated that, if this is a central government priority, they should send some officials up here to work on it.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: Though the usual suspects of weak local authorities, powerful former commanders and limited reach of government authorities are contributing to the failure of DIAG in Badghis province, the bigger issue is lack of local political will. In the absence of backup from Kabul, no provincial authority wants to tussle with local commanders who in many cases enjoy popular support in their communities. Given that Badghis security environment is so permissive, this may not bode well for the future of the program anywhere in the country. While in southern provinces officials struggle to convince citizens to give up arms in the face of real security threats, in Badghis, no such excuse exists.

¶9. (SBU) COMMENT CONTINUED: What is also worrisome is the inability of the central government to extend its policy of adherence to DIAG to the provinces. Badghis officials were only vaguely aware of Karzai's trip to Japan, and seemed to draw no connection between his renewed commitments on a national level to the DIAG process at the provincial one. Local officials seem to believe that if the program were truly important to o the central government, representatives from Kabul would come to the province and run it themselves.

NEUMANN